

Chapter Seventeen

Christian confronts the Valley of the Shadow of Death

A. The Valley of the Shadow of Death Described.

Now at the end of this valley there was another called the *Valley of the Shadow of Death*; and it was necessary for *Christian* to pass through it because the way to the *Celestial City* was in that direction. Now this valley was a very solitary and lonely place. The prophet *Jeremiah* describes it as, "A wilderness, a land of deserts and of pits, a land of drought and of the shadow of death, a land that no man" (except a *Christian*) "passes through, and where no man dwells."¹

Now it was here that *Christian* was more severely tried than when he earlier engaged *Apollyon* in battle; and this will become evident in the following account.

Here Christian faces, not so much his own death which awaits him at the end of his pilgrimage, but rather hellish things and persons that accompany death. These include those who traffic in death, beings justly consigned to death, and the chilling atmosphere of death that arises from hell to threaten the soul. The imagery here is based upon David's walk through "the valley of the shadow of death," or "the valley of death-darkness" (Ps. 23:4; cf. Is. 9:2; Jer. 2:6), that is a place of blackest darkness where satanic perils lurk. Kelman adds: "The chief notes of this valley are darkness, indefiniteness, and solitariness. It is a time when inner vitality seems dried up and dead, and there comes on the poisonous morbid mood of accidia [listlessness]... After all excitement of conflict [such as with Apollyon] there comes upon the overstrung victor a natural depression and melancholy" (The Road, Vol. 1, p. 142).

1. It is a solitary wilderness.

In quoting Jeremiah 2:6, a parallel is drawn between Israel and Christian. As Israel, having been redeemed out of Egypt, was appointed to a period of wilderness wandering before entry into Canaan was permitted, so Christian is likewise assigned to a period of wilderness wandering, as if in his soul, before he inherits spiritual fruitfulness (Jer. 2:7). Richard Sibbes explains: "Many men would be in Canaan as soon as they are out of Egypt, they would be at the highest pitch presently. But God will lead us through the wilderness of temptations and afflictions till we come to heaven" (Works, Vol. VII, p. 195).

¹ Jer. 2:6.

2. It is mandatory for pilgrims to traverse.

The only way to the Celestial City lies through this Valley. Certainly Pliable would have rebelled at the prospect of this place, if not before. None but an authentic pilgrim can understand the severe trials that such a passage brings, which Satan uses to obstruct and, at the same time, God ordains for spiritual growth (Ps. 25:16-20; 34:19; 88:6-9, 13-18; 143:12; Jas. 1:2-4).

3. It is more terrible than the previous Valley.

Whereas Apollyon had assailed with verbal taunt and fleshly temptation, and was repulsed by Christian's sword (Eph. 6:17), yet this more soulwrenching trial requires the application of a different weapon in reply. Flame and smoke, hideous noises, the spirits of wickedness and princes of darkness, must be answered with a distinctive weapon called "Allprayer" (Eph. 6:18). Sovereign assistance is Christian's supreme hope, as is the case at this same location with Mr. Fearing, described in Part Two (Works, Vol. III, p. 214).

B. The Meeting with Two Men who Bring an Evil Report.

In encountering a further pair of returning pilgrims, it is inevitable that a contrast be made here with Timorous and Mistrust who did not reach this far in their pilgrimage, but retreated. Kelman explains: "There are many who could face the lions from which the former pair of cowards fled, and who yet dare not enter such a valley as this. Lions, or human enemies, or the cannon's mouth, are definite dangers: this state of haunted depression, of melancholy suggestion and sinister hints of evil, unmans a different kind of mind by its indefiniteness. This is indicated by the vague answers which they give to Christian's questioning. They are in mortal terror, but they cannot tell what they are afraid of" (The Road, Vol. 1, pp. 144-145).

1. Their parentage reveals their bias.

So I [*Bunyan*] saw in my dream that, when *Christian* arrived at the borders of the *Valley of the Shadow of Death*,² two men met him there, namely children of those [*spies*] who had earlier delivered an evil report of the good [*Promised*] *Land*, and quickly determined to turn back.³ To these *Christian* spoke as follows:

CHRISTIAN: Where are you going?

MEN: Oh back, yes definitely back to where we have come from! And frankly, we would have you do exactly the same, that is if you value either life or peace.

² Ps. 23:4.

³ Num. 13:1-33.

Like their parents, namely the ten spies who brought back an evil report of Canaan (Num. 13:25-29), they know of the riches of the Celestial City. However, their fear of the terrors of death, of struggles and wrestlings with infernal powers, causes them to be faithless. Their perspective focuses upon human ability rather than divine enabling (I Sam. 17:41-47).

2. Their frightening description of the way ahead.

CHRISTIAN: Why? What is the matter with the way ahead?

MEN: You say "What is the matter"? Why we were pressing ahead just as you are presently doing, and reached as far as we dared. In fact had we gone only a little further on, it would have been impossible for us to return and bring this news to you.

CHRISTIAN: But what was it that you encountered?

MEN: Why we were almost in the *Valley of the Shadow of Death*, but through good fortune we happened to look ahead and see the danger before we came too near.⁴

CHRISTIAN: But what was it exactly that you saw?

MEN: What did we see? Why it was the *Valley* itself being as dark as pitch.⁵ We also saw there the hobgoblins, satyrs [*human/animal creatures*], and dragons of the pit;⁶ in that *Valley* we also heard a continual howling and yelling, as if from people experiencing unspeakable misery, people who sat bound in affliction and irons. And over that *Valley* there hung the discouraging clouds of confusion while death spread its wings and hovered over it.⁷ To sum up, it was a thoroughly dreadful sight; everywhere there was nothing but disorder.

CHRISTIAN: It is true that I have not yet seen what you describe. Nevertheless, the way ahead remains the chosen route by which I hope to arrive at my safe haven.⁸

It is a place of devouring jackals and swirling darkness for the faithful such as Christian (Ps. 44:17-19); it is a prison of misery and endless wailing for the rebellious such as these two (Ps. 107:10-11).

a. They warn according to greater experience.

Yet for all their boasted progress, they are governed by personal and sensual apprehension rather than the revealed will of 'God. Thus their understanding of life and peace will end in death and destruction (Prv. 14:12).

⁴ Ps. 44:19; 107:10.

⁵ Bunyan describes his experience of such darkness in *Grace Abounding*, § 261.

⁶ Isa. 13:21; 34:14.

⁷ Job 3:5; 10:22.

⁸ Ps. 107:30; Jer. 2:6.

b. They relate the creatures of the darkness.

While “Satyrs” and “Dragons” were part of the English terminology used in the King James Version of the Bible which Bunyan used, the inclusion of “Hobgoblins” indicates that he felt at liberty to draw upon the secular mythical imagery of his day as well.

(1) “Hobgoblins”, as also mentioned in Bunyan’s most famous hymn), are mythological, ferret-like, mischevious, ugly little demons.

(1) “Satyrs” are mythological, hairy, lascivious demons with mixed animal features. Cf. Isaiah 13:21; 34:14 (KJV), where this term is better translated “hairy goats” (NASB) or “wild goats” (NIV).

(2) “Dragons” are mythological, reptilian monsters that often breathe fire. Cf. Psalm 91:13; Isaiah 27:1; 34:13 (KJV), where this term is better translated “serpent, Leviathan (sea monster), jackal” (NASB; NIV).

b. They relate the cries of the damned.

The horror increases. Christian trembles as he imagines the howling, yelling and shrieking of those condemned to the shackles of hell (Ps. 107:10). In *The Greatness Of The Soul*, Bunyan describes “the dolesome and wearisomeness of hell; and how weary, oh! how weary and wearisomely, as I may say, will damned souls turn themselves from side to side, from place to place, in hell, while swallowed up in the thickest darkness, and griped with the burning thoughts of the endlessness of that most unutterable misery! (Matt. 22:13)” (Works, Vol. 1, p. 148).

c. They relate the discouraging clouds of confusion.

Death brings gloom, depression, and disarray. It stimulates chaos (job 3:1-5; 10:21-22). No doubt Bunyan has, in mind here his own torment when imprisoned. He recounts concerning this period in *Grace Abounding*: “I was once above all the rest in a very sad and low condition for many weeks; . . . I was not fit to die, . . . I was also at this time so really possessed with the thought of death, that oft I was as if I was on the ladder with a rope about my neck” (Works, Vol. 1, p. 49).

2. Their rejection of Christian’s way to life.

MEN: If that is still to be your way, then so be it; but we will not any longer choose it as ours.

So *Christian* parted with the two men and continued to move forward, though his sword remained drawn, at the ready, for fear that he might be assaulted.⁹

⁹ Eph. 5:15.

It seems implicit that the two defectors are not sufficiently equipped with suitable weapons of warfare. Therefore, it is not surprising that they retreat from the prospective assaults of this Valley. On the other hand, Christian is properly for pressing forward, especially with his drawn sword, so as to confront “the world forces of this darkness” (Eph. 6:12). Furthermore, his commitment is fixed to the way since it certainly leads to “the desired Haven.”

C. The Variety of Trials and Encouragements Along the Way.

As Israel had to learn in the midst of tribulation, “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you” (Is. 43:2), so Christian, like David, must also learn, “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for Thou art with me” (Ps. 23:4).

1. The treacherous nature of the Valley way.

When in the dark he was careful to shun the *Ditch* on the right-hand side, but then he found himself in danger of stumbling into the *Quagmire* on the left-hand side. Moreover, when he attempted to escape the *Quagmire*, unless he was very cautious, he would find himself on the brink of falling into the *Ditch*.

No doubt the pathway ahead remains straight. However, it is surrounding snares that threaten and make the passage to seem exceedingly narrow. To turn to the left or to the right is to court danger (Deut. 5:32; 28:14-15).

a. There is a deep ditch to the right.

It is for blind leaders of the blind, for purveyors and proselytes of error as represented by the Pharisees and their followers Matt. 15:10-14; 23:16, 24).

b. There is a dangerous quagmire to the left.

Being bottomless, it promotes instability, fear, and defilement, and offers the prospect of drowning except the sovereign mercy of God should come to the rescue (Ps. 94:14-15). Even a good man such as King David fell in at this place. Being unguarded, he committed adultery and murder, and was only delivered from smothering by the grace of God (II Sam. 11:1-12:23; Ps. 51:1-19).

2. Christian walks uncertainly in darkness.

Yet *Christian* went on and it was here that I heard him sigh ever so bitterly; the reason was that besides the dangers mentioned above, the pathway here was so dark that often, when he lifted his foot to take a step forward, yet he did not know what he would find when he put it down.¹⁰

¹⁰ I Sam. 2:9.

Cringing, trembling, probing, sighing, he pierces the gloom while probably recalling the warning of the two defectors he recently encountered.

a. The danger of overbalancing.

Christian has great difficulty in maintaining balance through overreaction in either direction, to the left or to the right. Strict avoidance of the ditch of error may lead to being drawn into the quagmire of moral failure, and vice versa. Bunyan describes his own experience of this teetering in *Grace Abounding*: “Wherefore, still my life hung in doubt before me, not knowing which way I should tip” (Works, Vol. I, p. 28).

b. The danger of blackest darkness.

This intense or “black darkness” (Jude 13) is that which arises from the realm of spiritual death and impedes the pilgrim’s walk; it is in contrast with “the light of life” (John 8:12). In *Grace Abounding*, Bunyan relates an experience that appears to have taken place well after his conversion. “At another time, though just before I was pretty well and savoury in my spirit, yet suddenly there fell upon me a great cloud of darkness, which did so hide from me the things of God and Christ, that I was as if I had never seen or known them in my life; I was also so over-run in my Soul, with a senceless heartless frame of spirit, that I could not feel my soul to move or stir after grace and life by Christ” (Works, Vol. 1, Paragraph 261, cf. 262-263, p. 40).

3. Christian passes the yawning mouth of Hell.

Now about in the middle of this *Valley*, here I noticed the location of the very mouth of *Hell*, it in fact being hard up against the narrow way. At the sight of this *Christian* wondered what he should do since so much flame and smoke were belching forth, accompanied with sparks and hideous noises. These fearful eruptions seemed quite unruffled concerning *Christian’s* sword, as had been the case with *Apollyon*; so the trembling pilgrim found it necessary to resort to another weapon called *All-Prayer*.¹¹ In using this I was able to hear him cry out, “Oh *Lord*, I implore you to deliver my soul!”¹²

Whereas Christian had, in the final scene at the House of the Interpreter, witnessed a man telling of how he had dreamt of standing before the open pit of Hell (p. 85), now our pilgrim relates his greater terror when he personally passes before that same place. And this will not be his last reminder of this fearful and hopeless prison.

¹¹ Eph. 6:18.

¹² Ps. 116:4.

- a. He shudders at its infernal raging.

The vivid picture here of flame, smoke, and sparks belching forth with accompanying hideous screaming, groaning, and doleful noises is not without biblical support. From the very mouth of Jesus Christ we have a similar description of the destiny of the damned (Matt. 13:41-42; 25:30; Luke 13:28; 16:22-24).

- b. He changes his mode of defence.

In this situation his sword seems ineffectual, that is, he is so spiritually arid that the Word of God has become to him as dull and lifeless. Bunyan tells us that while imprisoned, at certain “times[s] the whole Bible hath been to me as dry as a stick; or rather, my heart hath been so dead and dry unto it, that I could not conceive the least drachm [fraction of an ounce] of refreshment, though I have looked it ‘all’ over” (Works, Vol. I, p. 50). Hence, Christian resorts to his all-encompassing weapon of “Allprayer” (Eph. 6:18), just as David did (Ps. 18:4-6; 30:2-3; 34:4-7; 69:1-3). His desperate cry, “O Lord I beseech thee deliver my Soul” (Ps. 116:4), seeks the light of God to illumine his inner darkness (Ps. 56:13) and displace satanic threatenings.

4. Christian is harassed by hellish fiends.

So *Christian* continued to pray in this manner for a long while; at the same time, as he crept along the way, the flames of *Hell* seemed to lick ever so close to him; he also heard doleful voices and rushes back and forth, so that sometimes he thought he would be torn in pieces or trodden under foot like mire in the streets.¹³ While continuing to observe this frightful scene and hear such dreadful noises over the space of several miles, he came to a place where he thought he also heard a company of fiends who were approaching to meet him; this caused the pilgrim to muse over what it would be best for him to do.

Sometimes he had half a mind to go back; on the other hand he wondered if he might be at least half way through the *Valley*. He also recalled how he had already vanquished many a danger, and therefore he wondered if the perils of going back might be much greater than those encountered in going forward. So *Christian* decided to move ahead. Yet the fiends seemed to draw nearer and nearer; but when they seemed to be almost upon him, he cried out with such an impassioned cry, “I will walk in the strength of the *Lord*,”¹⁴ that they drew back and ceased their approach.

¹³ II Sam. 22:43; Isa. 10:6; Mic. 7:10.

¹⁴ Ps. 71:16.

Kelman comment@: “Interesting parallels will be found in Dante[’s Inferno], but it is characteristic of the two writers that while Dante goes into a medieval fulness of detail, which for us tempers the horror by its grotesqueness, Bunyan, with a finer touch, says just enough to stir the imagination, and leaves the effect to the reader’s own mind” (The Road Vol. 1, p. 148). In other words, Bunyan cleaves to Scripture rather than man-made tradition.

- a. They have dismal, threatening voices.

Christian hears suggestions and groanings, accompanied by flames and chilling breezes, that almost petrify his soul. What specifically is proposed? In *Come And Welcome To Jesus Christ*, Bunyan writes: “There are two things among many t@at Satan useth to to roar out after them that are coming to Jesus Christ [and have already come]. 1. That they are not elected. Or, 2. That they have sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost” (Works, Vol. I, p. 284). But worse, there is a persistence with these charges for many miles (days?). Refer to Bunyan’s own prolonged wrestling with these problems in *Grace Abounding*, (Works, Vol. I, Paragraphs 53-69, 147-188, pp. 12-14, 24-30).

- b. They are assailing fiends.

Christian feels outnumbered and terrified as these devils, being guardians of Hell, draw near. Thus, in *One @in Needful*, Bunyan poetically describes how those destined to perish shall respond to such demonic ministry (Works, Vol. III, p. 735).

The legions of infernal fiends
 Then with them needs must be,
 A just reward for all their pains,
 This they shall feel and see.
 With yellings, howlings, shrieks, and cries,
 And other doleful noise,
 With trembling hearts and failing eyes,
 These are their hellish joys.
 These angels black they would obey,
 And serve with greedy mind,
 And take delight to go stray,
 That pleasure they might find.
 Which pleasure now like poison turns
 Their joy to heaviness;
 Yea, like the gall of asps it burns,
 And doth them sore oppress.

- (1) He is intimidated by their nearness.

Stopping in his tracks, he ponders whether he ought to go back or press forward. But again he reasons, as before when confronted with the arguments of Timorous and Mistrust, that to retreat is possibly to face greater danger than that which is ahead. Besides, shall his victories to date be discarded as worthless? Thus he manifests the spirit of perseverance (Matt. 10:22; 1 John 2:18-19).

- (2) He intimidates with a cry of faith.

His defiant pronouncement, “I will walk in the strength of the Lord God” (Ps. 71:16; Prv. 10:29), is but a reflection of David’s steadfast faith when he faced ungodly opposition: “When evildoers come upon me to devour my flesh, my adversaries and my enemies, they stumbled and fell. Though a host encamp against me, my heart will not fear; though war rise against me, in spite of this I shall be confident” (Ps. 27:1-3). So Christian’s resistance results in the retreat of of his enemies (Jas. 4:7).

5. Christian is tempted to blaspheme his Lord.

One thing I should not avoid mentioning, by way of observation, is how poor *Christian* now appeared to be so confused; as I watched him, he did not even seem to know his own voice. Just when he came close to the mouth of the burning pit, one of the wicked ones sneaked up behind him, ever so softly, and whispered in his ear many suggestive and distressing blasphemies;¹⁵ these he was convinced had originated from his own mind. Thus, in this manner, *Christian* was more sorely pressed in his journey than at any other time, since it troubled him to think that he could possibly blaspheme he who he loved so much. If he could have helped it, he need not have been so troubled; nevertheless, he did not have the discretion both to stop his ears and understand the real source of these blasphemies.

Here Bunyan unveils the spiritual contest that commonly takes place in the arena of the soul of every genuine believer. “As for the secrets of Satan, such as are suggestions to question the being of God, the truth of his Word, and to be annoyed with devilish blasphemies; none [are] more acquainted with these than the biggest sinners at their conversion; wherefore thus also they are prepared to be helps in the church to relieve and comfort the other” (Works, Vol. I, p. 80). Like so many other Puritans, Bunyan was a skilled surgeon in such pastoral matters because of his diagnostic ability with the Bible and his honest application of this truth with regard to his own inner conflicts. This meant that his diagnoses were perceived theocentrically in terms of spiritual and vertical dimensions rather than relationally and horizontally in a carnal anthropocentric sense. It was vital that this distinction be grasped, otherwise wrong diagnoses could lead to despair.

¹⁵ I Tim. 4:1.

- a. He is confused by whispered suggestions.

In *Grace Abounding*, Bunyan describes his own experience of bewildered in his soul when assaulted by vile and satanic propositions, which occurred especially during his early acquaintance with Christian truth. “I should often find my mind suddenly put upon it, to curse and swear, or to speak some grievous thing against God, or Christ his Son, and of the Scriptures. Now I thought, surely I am possessed of the devil; at other times again, I thought I should be bereft of my wits” (Works, Vol. 1, Paragraphs 100-101, cf. 96-97, 136-137, p. 18).

- (1) They come from the pit of Hell.

A “wicked one” or devil sneaks up behind Christian and ever so subtly whispers shocking blasphemies to his inner being. Can any believer deny that similar such assaults have terrified him? Surely it is only Bunyan’s honesty that surprises us here, and not so much the lurid details.

- (2) They deceive as to their origin.

Christian at first believes that these devilish thoughts are his own. As Satan intends, this leads the victim to doubt his salvation. However, Bunyan’s surgical skill is most evident here as he lays bare the real source of this distress that even plagued the Apostle Paul (Rom. 7:21).

- b. He is unaware of remedial action.

In *Come And Welcome To Jesus Christ*, Bunyan gives an enlightening analysis of this sore trouble. “Let me a little query with thee about this matter. 1. Dost thou like these wicked blasphemies? Answ. No, no, their presence and working kills me. 2. Dost thou mourn for them, pray against them, and hate thyself because of them? Answ. Yes, yes; but that which afflicts me, I do not prevail against them. 3. Dost thou sincerely choose, mightest thou have thy choice, that thy heart might be affected and taken with the things that are best, most heavenly, and holy? Answ. With all my heart, and death the next hour, if it were God’s will, rather than thus to sin against him. Well then, thy not liking of them, thy mourning for them, thy praying against them, and thy loathing thyself because of them, with thy sincere choosing of those thoughts for thy delectation that are heavenly and holy, clearly declares, that these things are not countenanced either with thy will, affections, understanding, judgment, or conscience; and so, that thy heart is not in them, but that rather they come immediately from the devil, or arise from the body of death that is in thy flesh, of which thou oughtest to say, ‘Now, then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me’ (Rom. 7:17)” (Works, Vol. 1, p. 251).

- (1) Seek to identify the suggestive voice.

In other words, recognize that while demonic spirits may not possess a believer (I Cor. 6:20), yet they may, as “deceitful spirits” (I Tim. 4:1),

influence a believer, especially with the co-operation of the flesh, by means of suggestion, temptation, vision, and even an “inner voice.” Martin Luther recounts: “On Good Friday last, I being in my chamber in fervent prayer, contemplating with myself, how Christ my Saviour on the cross suffered and died for our sins, there suddenly appeared upon the wall a bright vision of our Saviour Christ, with the five wounds, steadfastly looking upon me, as if it had been Christ himself corporately. At first sight, I thought it had been some celestial revelation, but I reflected that it must needs be an illusion and juggling of the devil, for Christ appeared to us in his Word, and in a meaner and more humble form; therefore I spake to the vision thus: Avoid thee, confounded devil: I know no other Christ than he who was crucified, and who in his Word is pictured and presented unto me. Whereupon the image vanished, clearly showing of whom it came” (Table Lalk, pp. 137-138).

(2) Seek to silence the suggestive voice.

In other words, refuse to listen while actively seeking the cleansing voice of the Word of God, the fellowship of the saints, and godly Christian literature and music (Is. 33:15). Kelman makes the significant point here that, “from this point onwards, we shall never see him [Christian] alone. Had he from the first cultivated the love of men and clung to their companionship, it might have gone better with him in the valley” (The Road, Vol. 1, pp. 150-151).

6. Christian is encouraged by a distant voice.

When *Christian* had traveled in this depressed condition for some considerable time, he then thought he heard the voice of a man on pilgrimage ahead of him, saying, “Though I walk through the *Valley of the Shadow of Death*, I will fear no evil, for You are with me.”¹⁶ As a result he felt very glad, and that for the following reasons:

First, because he gathered from what he heard that some who feared *God* were in this *Valley* as well as himself.

Second, since he understood that *God* was with them, even in such a dark and dismal place, then he reasoned that this invisible presence ought also to be with him, in spite of the hindrances of such a region.¹⁷

Third, for the hope that he entertained of eventually having fellowship, should he be able to overtake those ahead of him. So he went on and called out to the man who was ahead, though he did not know what to say in reply since he also had thought himself to be alone. Eventually the light of the morning dawned; at this *Christian* exclaimed, “He has turned the shadow of death into the morning.”¹⁸

¹⁶ Ps. 23:4.

¹⁷ Job 9:10.

¹⁸ Christian is glad at the break of day. Amos 5:8.

Having just prayed, “O Lord I beseech thee deliver my Soul,” an immediate answer comes with the prospect of imminent fellowship. Depressed Christian is uplifted in his spirit upon hearing a distant voice ahead cry out: “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear none ill, for thou art with me” (Ps. 23:4).

a. He is glad at hearing a faithful voice.

While the mere recognition of another pilgrim ahead is comforting, yet of more encouragement is the assertive faith that is embodied in this other traveller. The contrast is between one pilgrim who struggles and another who is more triumphant in the midst of tribulation.

(1) It tells of another believer in the Valley.

Now he knows that there are other pilgrims ahead who trust God, as distinct from those who are returning to the City of Destruction. So he is saved from the lonely separatist attitude of Elijah (I Kings 19:9-10, 18).

(2) It tells of God’s comforting presence.

Now he perceives that God has been with them both in this place so thick with blinding darkness (job 9:10). He is saved from the ignorance of Jacob (Gen. 28:16) concerning the refreshing presence of God (Ps. 139:7-12).

(3) It tells of the near prospect of fellowship.

Now he desires to have fellowship reminiscent of that earlier enjoyed at the Palace Beautiful. He much prefers spiritual companionship, that offers mutual encouragement (Heb. 10: 24-25), rather than spiritual isolation.

b. He is eager to reach the faithful voice.

Christian’s call to the distant voice ahead is heard. Yet that pilgrim does not know who is behind. He has likewise thought of himself as alone. Probably he has learned to fear voices from the rear, that is emanating from the hellish regions of the Valley, and so is not presently encouraged.

7. Christian sees the dawning light displace the darkness.

Now that a new day had come, he looked back, not out of a desire to return, but rather to see more clearly, by daylight, exactly what hazards he had traversed in the dark. So he saw more distinctly the *Ditch* that was on one side and the *Quagmire* that was on the other; he also perceived just how narrow the way was that lay between these perils; furthermore, he also identified the hobgoblins, satyrs, and dragons of the pit, even though they were now some distance from him. Apparently after daybreak they were reluctant to draw near, though he saw them in fulfillment of it being written, "He reveals deep things out of darkness, and brings to light the shadow of death."¹⁹

So *Christian* was greatly moved with his deliverance from all the dangers of his solitary journey thus far. Now these trials, though he feared them more than ever, yet had become more apparent to him because the light of day had exposed them. So with the sun now rising, this advantage offered *Christian* even more mercy; for it is to be noted that though the first part of the *Valley of the Shadow of Death* was dangerous, yet the second part ahead of him was, if at all possible, far more dangerous. This was because throughout the remainder of the *Valley* there were set innumerable snares, traps, gins [*catching devices*], and nets,²⁰ as well as there being countless pits, pitfalls, deep holes, and unsafe ledges in those depths.

Had it now been as dark as was formerly the case, though he possessed a thousand souls, yet they all would have been lost in this region. But, as I said, the sun was now rising. For this reason the pilgrim declared, "His candle shines on my head, and by his light I go through the darkness."²¹

In the middle of the Valley, at its darkest and most depressing depths, yet the grace of light dawns (Amos 5:8). The evils of the day are not driven away, but rather are more clearly identified since the second part of this evil vale is declared to be more dangerous than the first.

a. The illumination of the way behind.

In looking back he now discerns the hazards that he has so recently overcome, that is the ditch and quagmire, the narrowness of the way, and the hellish fiends. Only the penetration of the light, that is the gracious revelation of God (I Cor. 2:15), allows him to recognise the hideous hobgoblins, satyrs, and dragons as they slink away to their preferred haven of flame and darkness (job 12:22).

¹⁹ Job 12:22.

²⁰ Gaming equipment.

²¹ Job 29:3.

b. The illumination of the way ahead.

Now he discerns a new and even more threatening array of devilish hazards before him such as snares (gins), traps, nets, pits, slopes, etc. Had it not been for the light of the newly risen sun, these perils would certainly have consumed him (job 29:3). Bunyan comments: “God has suffered them [wicked spirits] for a time to take to themselves principality and power, and so they are become the the rulers of the darkness of this world. By these we are tempted, sifted, threatened, opposed, undermined: also by these there are snares, pits, holes, and what not made and laid for us, if peradventure by something we may be destroyed. Yea, and we should most certainly be so, were it not for the rock that is higher than they (John 3:31)” (Works-, Vol. II, p. 8).

D. The Grisly Ministry of Two Tyrannical Giants.

As a thoroughly convinced Protestant, Bunyan was strongly opposed to Mohammedanism and Roman Catholicism, and especially the latter. It should be remembered that at the time of his conversion, the defeat of the Spanish Armada had taken place only seventy years prior. Further, up to the age of twenty one, he had lived under the pro-Catholic monarchy of King Charles 1, as well as the pro-Reformation legacy espoused by the dawning influence of Oliver Cromwell and English Presbyterianism. The execution of the King in 1649 then ushered in the unfettered reign of Protestantism from Westminster which lasted till the restoration of the Monarchy under King Charles 11 in 1650.

1. The evidence of their carnage.

Therefore in this light *Christian* came to the end of the *Valley*. Now I saw in my dream that at the end of this *Valley* there lay blood, bones, ashes, and the mangled bodies of men, even of pilgrims who had earlier come this way.²² And while I was musing over what could be the reason for these remains, I noticed a short way ahead a cave in which lived two giants, *Pope* and *Pagan*; here they had lived for a long time, and by power and tyranny had cruelly put to death the men whose bones, blood, and ashes lay before him.

The gruesome collection of human remains described at the end of the Valley is no doubt prompted by Bunyan’s esteem for Foxe’s Book of Martyrs. This volume, and his Bible, were his only accompanying books while imprisoned at Bedford (Brown, John Bunyan, pp. 153-154). Especially in mind would have been the burning at the stake in England, such as at Smithfield in London and Oxford, of near three hundred Protestants by Queen (Bloody) Mary a hundred years prior to the writing of The Pilgrim’s Progress.

²² As described in Foxe’s Book of Martyrs.

2. The residence of giants' Pagan and Pope.

Yet at this place *Christian* passed by without much danger, and this somewhat surprised me. But subsequently I have learned that *Pagan* has been dead for many a day; and as for the other, though he is still alive, yet, on account of his old age and the many shrewd conflicts that he met with in his younger days, he has grown crazy and stiff in his joints. As a result he can now do little more than sit in the mouth of his cave, grinning at pilgrims as they go by and biting his nails, being frustrated because he cannot intercept them.

So I saw that *Christian* went on his way, though at the sight of the old man that sat at the mouth of the cave, he could not decide what to think, especially because *Pope* was unable to approach him, though he threateningly spoke, "You will never mend, until more of you are burned."

The fact that these two tyrants have lived together indicates Bunyan's estimate that Romanism is at home with paganism, while paganism is happy to bed down with counterfeit Christianity. The cave, rather than an ornate palace, probably reflects the perceived fallen condition of these evil colossi.

a. Pagan has died.

Perhaps influenced by optimistic reports from the new American colonies, as well as the expansive influence of the Reformation and Christian literature, Bunyan wrongly concluded that paganism was on the retreat. The secularization of this twentieth century is sufficient proof of paganism's massive resurgence. Kelman also adds: "It must be remembered that in the times of the Crusades and the Romances the word pagan was applied to Mohammedans" (*The -Road-*. Vol. 1, p. 157). This being so, the modern expansion of Islam would also discount Bunyan's assessment.

b. Pope is now senile.

Here is one of Bunyan's most humorous and yet devastating characterizations, even though it also comes to a wrong conclusion. Elsewhere he writes of "that cursed monster the pope" (*Works*, Vol. 11, p. 426). In *The Holy War* King Diabolus recruits an army of twenty five thousand men for the purpose of capturing the town of Mansoul. Of these, fifteen thousand are Doubters and ten thousand are Bloodmen. One contingent of Bloodmen is under the command of Captain Pope, whose rallying emblem is a stake, on which is impaled a burning martyr (*Works*, Vol. III, p. 362). Here again, Bunyan's misplaced though understandable optimism presents Pope as decrepit, past his prime, and thus less threatening to pilgrims. Yet if Bunyan were alive today, would he not revise this portrayal by means of bestowing upon his enemy a degree of rejuvenation?

(1) He is frustrated.

His Jesuitical shrewdness remains boundless; his desire to persecute is undiminished; his seductive smile still attempts to deceive. However, the creeping arthritic corruption of sterile religion has brought on distressing paralysis. Hence, he nervously bites his nails in vexation.

(2) He is unrepentant.

His voice is not crippled so that he cries out to passing Christian: "You will never mend, till more of you be burned." Yet could "the old man" nevertheless experience "a second youth"? Certainly the Pope today could in no way be described as being both tethered and impotent!

3. The joyful progress of Christian without harm.

But he held his peace and smiled as he passed by, though without suffering any harm. Then *Christian* sang:

Oh world of wonders! (I can say no less)
 That I should be preserved in that distress
 That I have met with here! Oh blessed be
 That hand that from it has delivered me!
 Dangers in darkness, devils, *Hell*, and sin,
 Did compass me, while I this vale was in:
 Yes, snares, and pits, and traps, and nets did lie
 My path about, that worthless silly I Might have been caught,
 entangled, and cast down:
 But since I live, let *Jesus* wear the crown.

Pope does not distract or stimulate fear in Christian for his course is firmly set along the narrow way ahead. Having entered this Valley with fear and sighing, he now emerges at its end with singing and rejoicing. Like the best of Christian hymns, he exalts in the gracious deliverance of Jesus Christ. How gladly could he have sung:

The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,
 I will not, I will not desert to his foes;
 That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
 I'll never, no, never, no, never forsake.

Author unknown